

Should the Augustin Plains Ranch, LLC be allowed to pump the amount of water they asked for?

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Do you think that the Augustin Plains Ranch, LLC has the right to pump the water that is under their land? If money was no object to you, would you consider a similar request? After all they are only asking for 3 acre feet of water per acre for each of the 18,000 acres of land they own. Does that sound exorbitant; that is only 54,000 acre feet of water per year? I have 40 acres and only received 3 acre feet per year. I know of others who have even more acres and they only received 3 acre feet of per year.

Here is why I think it is exorbitant; **first** it is not for the beneficial use of the land involved. **Second**, the water they want to pump is not only under their land but under all of the adjoining land in the whole basin. **Third**, this pumping scheme will adversely affect the property values of the rest of the basin. **Fourth**, the mining of this water in the plains will cause land settlement and tension cracks to form, especially in the north basin. **Fifth**, once this water is over pumped there will be no recharging of the aquifer for thousands of years. **Sixth**, if the permit is granted why wouldn't other land owners in the basin also make similar request for water? **Seventh**, the southwest is currently in a protracted drought and what little water we are currently receiving is needed to keep groundwater levels from declining too much. **Eighth**, with the APR, LLC only owning 18,000 acres in the plains (1.4% of the whole basin or 5.6% of all the private land) why would the State allow them to control over half of what little annual recharge is occurring in the basin. In the mid 1970's this recharge was estimated to be 100,000 acre feet per year. **Ninth**, the request for this water by the APR, LLC has been turned down twice do to the application being faulty under the States guidelines. **Tenth**, how can the State grant this request when the APR, LLC does not own the water under appropriation, but is merely granted use of the water under the permit system? I don't think the State has the authority to give away water for someone else's financial gain. There has to be a beneficial use involved and I don't think it is for profit.

The APR's request has no sustainability in it and will only degrade the aquifer. Many aquifers in this country and around the world are in jeopardy of being pumped dry. So the question then comes to when is depletion considered impairment? I think this request will cause impairment and is that considered good stewardship of a vital resource by the State? I think that this request should be denied once again.

Dennis Inman

dennisinman43@gmail.com

THE PLAINS OF SAN AUGUSTIN

Since the Hydro-geologic study done by Bloddget and Titus in the mid 1970's when they estimated the annual recharge to the basin to be approx. 100,000 acre feet; the basin has been in a protracted drought. They could not reconcile why there was not more water in the basin from their water well analysis. The Augustin Plains Ranch, LLC is proposing to extract 54,000 acre feet annually, this is over half of the annual recharge and that recharge figure is more like 70 to 80,000 acre feet now. So their proposal is nothing more than a mining scheme. There is no way for them to recharge the aquifer with surface run off since there is little to no run off occurring over these last couple of years. The precipitation that is occurring is currently recharging the basin but at a much slower rate than in the past.

In the last couple of years several faults have been identified that are leaking water out of the basin. One of these faults is supplying water to the Tularosa River which was part of the Gila-San Francisco River adjudication. However, this water was never attributed as coming from the Plains of San Augustin. There are 4 or 5 faults that are supplying water to the Alamosa River and water is suspected to be leaking into the Gila River.

Plains of San Augustin Ownership

	<u>ACRES</u>	<u>SQUARE MILES</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>	
Watershed Size	1,275,319.70	1993		
Socorro County	281,294.90	441	22%	
Catron County	991,143.00	1,551	78%	
BLM	142,313.60	222.4	11%	
FS	280,803.40	438.8	22%	
State	320,581.40	500.1	25%	
Private	531,621.40	830.7	42%	
APR, LLC	≈18,000.00	28.13	1.4%	
			5.6%	Of private Land

Rainfall Over 2200 Years in New Mexico

Tree rings from El Malpais National Monument (Henri Grissino-Mayer)

